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LA MÊME COLLECTION

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Y A S A N

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Ya San
Huang Jia Wei - Wang Bang

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Huang Jia Wei
Dessinateur

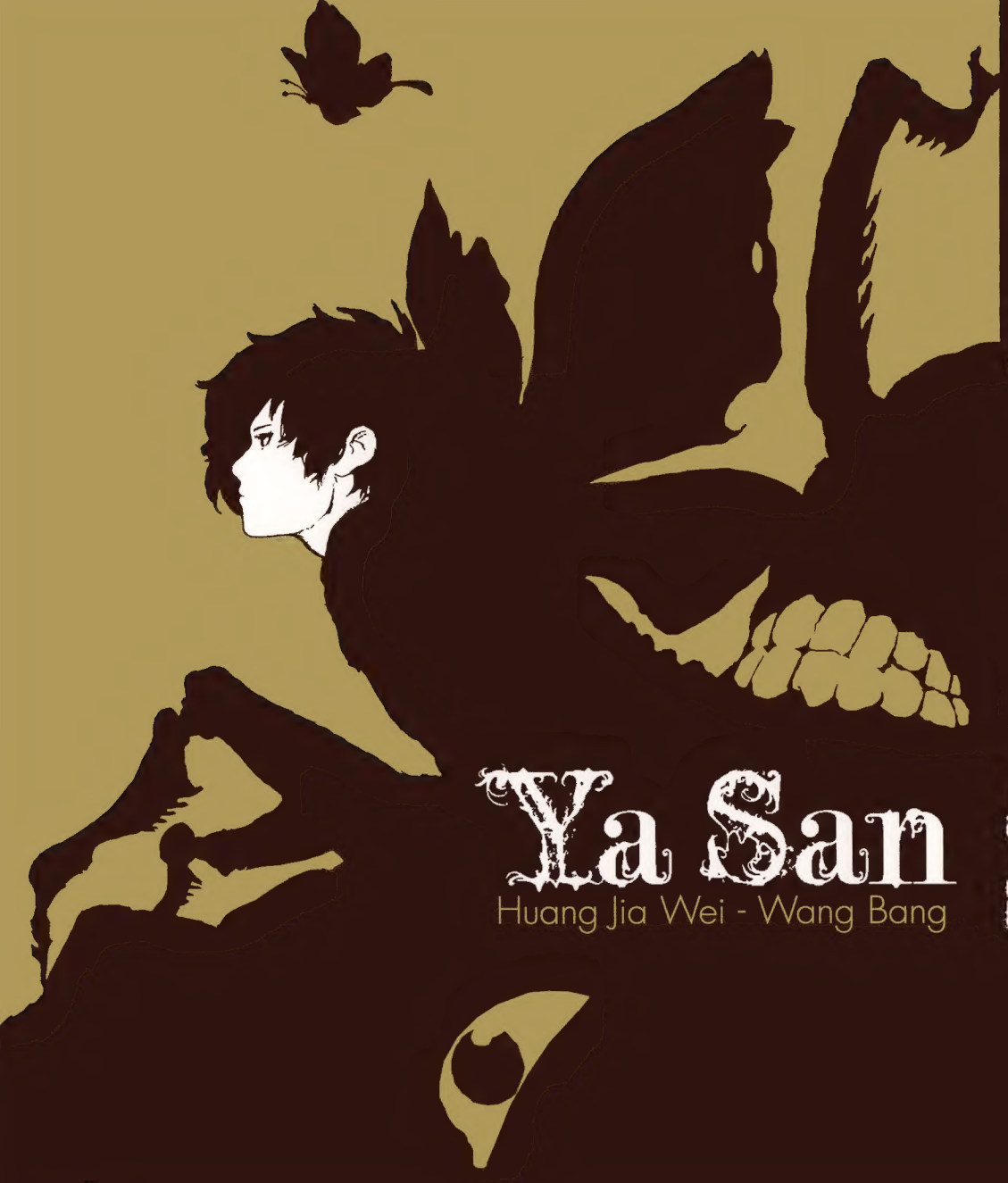
Huang Jia Wei est né en 1983. Depuis l'enfance, ce jeune auteur chinois nourrit le rêve de devenir dessinateur de manhuas. ***Ya San*** est en fait la première œuvre de l'auteur dépassant les cent pages.
Ce manhua fut présenté en tant que travail de fin d'année pour couronner les études de dessin de Huang Jia Wei. L'auteur en attend donc la publication en France avec impatience. Même si, dans sa grande humilité, Huang Jia Wei qualifie lui-même son style d'"enfantin", il espère que ses dessins seront bien reçus et il entend continuer sur sa lancée pour nous offrir d'autres œuvres toujours plus captivantes.

Wang Bang
Scénariste

Née en 1974, Wang Bang appartient à la nouvelle génération des jeunes écrivains chinois. Elle est par ailleurs également réalisatrice de cinéma. Son intérêt pour la culture jeune asiatique et son sens inné de la révolte font d'elle une figure de proue du monde littéraire et artistique chinois.

Ses publications :
- Un roman pour adolescents, ***Atlantis*** (juin 2002).
- Un recueil de critiques cinématographiques, ***La Ville vue par le cinéma*** (juin 2004).
- Une série de nouvelles sur la violence, ***Vivre caché*** (octobre 2006).
- Quatre livres d'histoires courtes urbaines. ***Le Bonheur en ce temps-là*** et ***Petite Neige*** en collaboration avec le dessinateur Li Zhaoxiong (octobre 2005), puis ***Zhui le débutant*** et ***Le Peigne du phénix et du dragon*** avec les auteurs de manhuas Zou Yun et Huang Wanshan (octobre 2006).

Ya San
Huang Jia Wei - Wang Bang
MADE IN



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Ya San

Huang Jia Wei - Wang Bang

MADE IN

READ THIS!!

HUANG JIA WEI WISHES TO WHOLEHEARTEDLY THANK WANG BANG FOR HER SCENARIO AND DAISY LEE FOR HER HELP.

HUANG JIA WEI - ART

HUANG JIA WEI WAS BORN IN 1983. SINCE HIS CHILDHOOD, THIS YOUNG CHINESE AUTHOR DREAMT OF BEING A MANHUA ILLUSTRATOR. YA SAN IS IN FACT HIS FIRST WORK THAT GOES OVER A HUNDRED PAGES.
THIS MANHUA HAS BEEN PRESENTED AS THE FINAL PROJECT TO CROWN HIS DRAWING STUDIES. THE AUTHOR IS AWAITING ITS PUBLICATION IN FRANCE WITH EAGERNESS.
EVEN IF, IN HIS GREAT HUMILITY, HUANG JIA WEI DESCRIBES HIS WORK AS "IMMATURE", HE HOPES THAT HIS DRAWINGS WILL BE WELL RECEIVED AND INTEND TO CONTINUE FORGING AHEAD TO BRING US MORE GRIPPING WORKS.

WANG BANG - STORY

BORN IN 1974, WANG BANG BELONGS TO THE NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG CHINESE WRITERS. SHE IS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A FILM DIRECTOR. HER INTEREST IN THE ASIAN YOUTH CULTURE AND HER INANE SENSE OF REVOLT MAKE HER ONE OF THE LEADING LIGHTS OF THE CHINESE LITERARY AND ARTISTIC WORLD.

Ya San

Huang Jia Wei - Wang Bang

MADE IN

NUPANSEN'S SHOP

AUGUST, DURING THE DROUGHT. THE SHORTAGE OF WATER AFFECTS THE TOWN OF ZHIHAI, EVEN THE SEWERS ARE ALMOST DRIED OUT. THE INHABITANTS OF THE VILLAGE OF MUPANSEN ARE AMONG THE POOREST SOCIAL CLASSES. THE WASTE-WATER DRAINAGE CANAL CROSSES THE FOUNDATIONS OF THEIR HOUSES AND THE POPULATION SUFFER THE STENCH IN FULL MEASURE.

B1

WITH THE SCORCHING CLIMATE OF SUMMER, WHAT EVAPORATES IN THE AIR IS NOT ONLY THE SMELL OF DECAY, BUT ALSO A TASTE OF BURNT ANIMAL FAT. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SERVICE BUSTLES ABOUT GIVING OUT WATER AND ANTISEPTICS IN THE DISTRICT A (THE RICH DISTRICT) WITHOUT EVEN WORRYING ABOUT THESE SLUMS THAT DON'T PAY ANY TAXES AND DEPEND EACH YEAR ON THE MEAGER HELP FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

YA SAN IS A YOUNG BOY FROM MUPANSEN. WHEN HE WAS A CHILD, HE CONTRACTED A DISEASE THAT MAKES HIM SENSITIVE TO LIGHT AND PREVENTS HIM FROM MAKING SUDDEN MOVEMENTS.

HE LIVES IN A CABIN MADE FROM AN OLD OAKEN ROWBOAT AND COVERED WITH ASBESTOS.

MANY YEARS AGO, THE SMALL AND CLEAR RIVER OF ZHIHAI ISLAND HAD NOT YET BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A DRAINAGE CANAL. IT WENT AROUND THE WOODS, THE ROCKS, FOLLOWED THE COAST AND FLOWED INTO THE SEA.

MUPANSEN HAD STILL NOT BECOME THIS VILLAGE OF REFUGEES WHO CAME FROM EVERY-WHERE AND THIS HUMBLE LITTLE TOWN MANAGED TO PROVIDE FOR ITS NEEDS.

YA SAN'S GRANDFATHER WAS A FISHERMAN. RUMORS SAY THAT ON A CERTAIN YEAR, DURING AUGUST'S DROUGHT, FRESH WATER BECAME SCARCE. SUCH A HEAT HAD NEVER BEEN SEEN AND THE PRICE OF FISH DROPPED TO ITS LOWEST LEVEL.

THE POOR MAN HAD TO FISH EVEN MORE FISHES. ONE MORNING AT DAWN, HE SET SAIL WITH HIS BOAT, AS USUAL.

!!

!!

HE DRIFTED MORE THAN A WEEK, SO MUCH THAT HIS FAMILY AND NEIGHBORS STARTED TO WORRY AND SENT SOME EXPERIENCED SAILORS TO LOOK FOR HIM. THEY ENDED UP FINDING HIS BOAT STRANDED ON A REMOTE ISLET. BUT THE OLD MAN HAD MYSTERIOUSLY VANISHED.

THERE WASN'T THE SLIGHTEST FISH IN THE SMALL CRAFT BUT IT WAS FILLED WITH STRANGE INSECTS. A LEGEND TELLS THAT ONE DAY, A CURIOUS INSECT WAS BORN FROM A GHOST FATHER. HE LIVED ALONE AND LOOKED LIKE A HORRIBLY UGLY MAN, WEARING A RAINCOAT. THEY CALLED HIM "THE RAINCOAT INSECT"*.

HIS MOTHER, ALBEIT BEING A GHOST TOO, GOT AFRAID AT THE SIGHT OF A CHILD SO UGLY-LOOKING. SHE TOLD HIM TO WAIT FOR HER UNTIL AUGUST BUT NEVER CAME BACK AND ABANDONED HIM. THIS INSECT IS RARELY FOUND ON THE SEAFRONT.

*IN FACT, THIS INSECT FROM THE FAMILY OF THE GEOMETRIDAE (A LARGE FAMILY THAT NOTABLY INCLUDES THE CATERPILLARS THAT CHANGE INTO MOTHS) IT OWES ITS CHINESE NAME TO THE FACT THAT IT LIVES CURLED UP IN A TREE LEAF THAT ACTS AS SHELTER, FOOD AND "CLOTHING".

THE MEN WHO DISCOVERED THEM SAW THIS AS A BAD OMEN. LEFT THE BOAT AND WENT AWAY. SOON AFTER HAVING RETURNED TO THEIR HOME. THEY CONTRACTED A STRANGE ILLNESS AND DIED ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

!!

A GAO. AN OLD FRIEND OF YA SAN'S GRANDFATHER. TAKING ADVANTAGE OF A NIGHT WHEN THE MOON WAS PARTICULARLY BRIGHT. TOOK A BOAT AND SECRETLY WENT TO LOOK FOR HIS FRIEND. HE DIDN'T EXPECT THAT IN THE MIDST OF THE NIGHT HE WOULD HAVE TO FACE LIGHTNING AND A RAGING SEA.

HIS BOAT MADE OUT OF OAK WAS DESTROYED BY THE STORM AND THE REEFS. SOME MEN FOUND HIM SOME TIME LATER AND KEPT THE DEBRIS IN MEMORY OF THE DECEASED.

IN THE YEARS THAT FOLLOWED, THE FISHERY TRADE STARTED TO DETERIORATE AT MUPANSEN.

WHEN HE REACHED THE AGE OF REASON, YA SAN'S FATHER FOLLOWED HIS UNCLE TO THE CITY IN ORDER TO FIND A JOB.

HE BECAME A COBBLER AND ALSO A WAITER

BUT HE STILL HADN'T FOUND HIS WAY AND ENDED UP JOINING THE SEWER CLEANING TEAM OF DISTRICT E.

AT THE END OF THE MONTH, HE WOULD RECEIVE HIS PAY AND BRING BACK EVERYTHING THAT YA SAN LIKED TO EAT, ALONG WITH SOME OF THE COMIC BOOKS HE PREFERRED.

AS FOR THE BOY'S MOTHER, WHAT WAS TOLD ABOUT HER WAS RATHER ODD. SOME SAID THAT SHE HAD CRUELLY THROWN HIM IN THE SEWER WHEN HE WAS BORN AND THAT HE'D BEEN RECOVERED AND BROUGHT BACK TO LIFE BY HIS ADOPTIVE FATHER.

OTHERS ALSO REPORTED THAT HIS FATHER INDEED HAD A WIFE, BUT THAT SHE NEVER LIVED IN TOWN BECAUSE SHE CAME FROM A WEALTHY FAMILY. IN ANY CASE, YA SAN WAS DOOMED NOT TO SEE HIS MOTHER.

DAD !!

SAN*, I'M HOME.

*IN CHINA, AS IS CUSTOMARY, THE SURNAME ALWAYS COMES BEFORE THE FORENAME (WHICH IS ONLY USED BETWEEN RELATIVES). HERE, SAN IS THEN THE FORENAME OF THE YOUNG BOY.

YOU'RE READING THIS COMIC BOOK AGAIN ?

IT'S SO COOL... SEE IF YOU CAN BRING ANOTHER LIKE THIS ONE NEXT TIME... HEHE!

THE GIRL WITH THE CLOUDY BLOOD

...

HELP !!!

COME, QUICKLY!

THE NOISE TURNED INTO A RACKET MINGLED WITH CRIES. THESE MOANS GREW HIGHER AND HIGHER. YA SAN WAS STRICKEN WITH PANIC. HOWEVER, A STRANGE FEELING COMPELLED HIM TO OPEN THE DOOR OF HIS CABIN.

?!

XIAO HUA*

...

...HELP, HURRY !!

THE BOY CROSSED THE TALL GRASS IN FRONT OF HIS DOOR. WENT THROUGH A SMALL ALLEY...

...AND CAME OUT ONTO THE DRAINAGE CANAL BANKS.

A CROWD WAS RUNNING ON THE WATERSIDE WITH A ROBUST FELLOW, HOLDING A BAMBOO POLE AND A ROPE, LEADING THE GROUP. YA SAN KNEW HIM. IT WAS KUAN. HE WAS IN CHARGE OF THE LOCATION OF THE APARTMENTS AT MUPANSEN. IN THE THICK OF THIS MESS, YOU COULD HEAR THE TEARING CRIES OF MRS MEI, THE MARKET GARDENER, SUPPORTED BY A FEW WOMEN.

THE DRAINAGE CANAL WAS ALREADY ALMOST DRY. ONLY A FEW WHIRLS OF MUD STILL FORMED HERE AND THERE. LOOKING IN THE DISTANCE, YOU COULD SEE THE SKINNY BODY OF A YOUNG GIRL THAT FLOATED LIKE A RUBBER RING. SHE WAS SINKING HEAD FIRST IN ONE OF THE WHIRLS. HER STIFF LEGS, WHITE AS THE SNOW, HAD THE LOOK OF TWO BAMBOO STICKS POINTING AT THE SKY.

ONE OF HER FEET WAS BARE AND THE OTHER WORE A SANDAL OF RED PLASTIC. THE SIGHT CAST A CHILL AMONG THE INHABITANTS. WHEN SHE SAW THAT IT WAS INDEED HER DAUGHTER, MRS MEI STOPPED DEAD, AS IF PARALYZED.

KUAN AND A HANDFUL OF MEN JOINED THEIR FORCES TO DRAG THE BODY OUT OF THE WATER.

!!

EXCEPT FOR THE LOTUS FLOWER ON THE DRESS WHICH WAS STILL RECOGNIZABLE, THE WHOLE BODY WAS BLACK WITH MUD. SOMEBODY BROUGHT A BUCKET OF SOMEWHAT CLEAN WATER, PLUNGED A TOWEL IN IT AND WASHED THE YOUNG GIRL'S FACE.

XIAO HUA*...

THE YOUNG GIRL HAD A BIRTHMARK ON HER FACE THAT FORMED A BIG VIOLET BLISTER. SINCE HER CHILDHOOD, THE OTHER KIDS WERE MAKING FUN OF HER AND THE STRAY DOGS WERE RUNNING AFTER HER...

* PRONOUNCED "SIAO LUA"

WHEN HIS DISEASE STRUCK FOR THE SECOND TIME, THEY CARRIED YA SAN TO HIS SMALL OAK CABIN. HIS LETHARGY LASTED SEVERAL DAYS. THE SLIGHTEST LIGHT CAUSED HIM INTENSE PAIN.

HE HAD COUNTLESS NIGHTMARES. IN ONE OF THEM, HE WAS SAILING ON THE SEA. THE LIGHT RAYS COMING FROM THE WEST GAVE HIM THE FEELING THAT HIS EYES WERE DOING SLIGHTLY BETTER. HE WAS SITTING IN HIS BOAT AND WAS STARTING TO ROW.

WHEN HE RECOVERED MUCH LATER, HE REALIZED THAT HE HAD NEVER LEFT THE LAND.

THE HARBOR WASN'T FAR FROM THE TOWN OF MUPANSEN. HOWEVER, A LUXURY YACHT FACTORY STRETCHED OUT FROM THE DOCKS TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE TOWN. ONLY A SMALL PATH ALLOWED YOU TO REACH THE SHORE, BUT IT HAD BEEN FENCED WITH WIRE NETTING AND ELECTRIC CABLES.

HE WAS STILL ROWING, THE SKY WAS DARKENING LITTLE BY LITTLE. ALL THAT WAS LEFT ON THE SURFACE OF THE WATER WAS A FEW DEEP BLACK WAVES AND THE GREYISH FOAM THAT FLOATED ON THE SEA. HE SUDDENLY NOTICED A BEACON IN THE DISTANCE. A YELLOW LIGHT WAS COMING OUT OF IT.

THE LIGHTHOUSE WAS LOCATED ON A DESERTED ISLAND, SURROUNDED BY RED REEFS. THE YOUNG BOY STRUGGLED TO REACH THE BASE OF THE BEACON.

?

!!

YA SAN FELT THAT HIS HAND WHICH WAS HOLDING THE METALLIC RUNG WAS ITCHING. HE LOOKED AT IT AND SAW THAT IT WAS SWARMING WITH LARVAS. LOOKING CLOSER, HE NOTICED THAT THE LADDER WAS COVERED WITH RATHER STRANGE INSECT EGGS!

XIAO HUA?

!!!!

...

YA SAN...

YA SAN...

YA SAN ...

...

XIAO HUA, IS THAT YOU?!!!

CONVINCED THAT IT WAS INDEED XIAO HUA WHO WAS ALSO A LONER, HE PULLED HIMSELF TOGETHER AND CLIMBED. WHEN HE WAS NEAR THE SUMMIT, THE CALLS BECAME HIGHER-PITCHED AND CLOSER.

...

...

...

IS THAT YOU? HELLO?

HEY! XIAO HUA!

WAS IT HER OR NOT? HAD SHE COME TO PLAY ON THIS ISLAND? SUDDENLY, THE CALLS STOPPED.

?!

...

YOU TOO, YOU OFTEN GO ALONE?

DID YOU COME TO PLAY WITH ME?

I'M BORED. I'VE BEEN HERE SO LONG BY MYSELF.

COME ON!

...

...

ER...

TAKE MY HAND.

!!

YA SAN HAD NEVER BEEN SO CLOSE TO A GIRL. SO HE STARTED TO BLUSH ALL OF A SUDDEN.

SO!?

HUM... I'M GONNA GO.

I HAVE SEVERE INSOMNIA. IT'S BEEN LIKE THIS SINCE THEY SENT ME TO THIS ISLAND... I CAN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE.

STAY WITH ME A BIT MORE! THE SUN WILL RISE SOON! I CAN'T SLEEP BEFORE DAWN.

WHILE SPEAKING, THE LITTLE GIRL TURNED HER HEAD AND STARED AT HIM IN A RAY OF LIGHT. YA SAN HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HER FACE PRESENTED SOME CURIOUS DEFORMATIONS.

!!

IN THE RAYS OF THE RISING SUN, HER USUALLY CHARMING FACE, BEGAN TO DISTORT ALL OVER. IT WAS AS IF WORMS, ENOUGH TO MAKE YOUR HAIR STAND ON END, WERE COMING OUT ONE BY ONE, FROM HER WIDENING PORES!

XIAO HUA'S FUNERAL WAS THE MOST RUDIMENTARY OF THESE LAST YEARS. SINCE THEY DIDN'T FIND A MOTIVE FOR THE MURDER, THEY CONCLUDED THAT SHE DROWNED BY ACCIDENTALLY FALLING INTO THE CANAL.

THE SECOND RED PLASTIC SANDAL, WHICH WAS FOUND TWO WEEKS LATER AT THE EAST END OF THE CANAL, WAS KEPT IN REMEMBRANCE OF HER.

MEI ...

MRS MEI DIDN'T CRY ANYMORE, BUT SHE WAS NEVER SEEN PULLING HER CART IN THE STREETS TO SELL HER VEGETABLES AGAIN. AND WHILE THE SARCASMS ALMOST STOPPED, SHE WAS SEEN LESS AND LESS. SINCE THEN, THE TOWN HAS BEEN BATHED IN A GREYISH MIST.

NOBODY CAME TO RECLAIM THE SHOE. A CAO*, AN UNEMPLOYED YOUNG MAN, HUNG IT FROM A TEA TREE. SOMETIMES SOME PASSING STRANGERS WOULD BURN SOME INCENSE, PROBABLY SO THAT XIAO HUA COULD FIND HAPPINESS IN ANOTHER LIFE.

THE STRANGEST THING WAS THAT THIS TEA TREE WAS STILL A LITTLE GREEN A SHORT TIME AGO. DESPITE THE LACK OF WATER, IT SEEMED TO RESIST THE DROUGHT MORE THAN ANY HUMAN BEING. BUT NOW, YOU COULD TELL THAT IT WAS GOING TO DIE.

A BAD OMEN.

YA SAN FOUND A BLACK PLASTIC BAG, SLIPPED THE SHOE IN IT AND BROUGHT IT BACK HOME.

* PRONOUNCED "A TSAO"

...

YA SAN STILL HADN'T SORTED OUT THE EVENTS CONCERNING XIAO HUA WHEN A NEW TRAGIC INCIDENT OCCURED AT MUPANSEN. THE YOUNG UNEMPLOYED A CAO HAD BEEN THROWN INTO A MANHOLE.

THIS DREADFUL AFFAIR ENDED UP ALERTING THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SERVICE AND SPREAD PANIC AMONG THE WORKERS. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK IN THE SEWERS AND RESIGNED ONE AFTER ANOTHER.

AROUND 4 O'CLOCK THIS AFTERNOON ...

!!

...THE DIGGER'S SHOVEL PLUNGED INTO THE SEWERS AND TOOK A BODY OUT OF THEM.

...

AMONG THE VILLAGERS A RUMOR BEGAN TO SPREAD WHICH SAID THAT THE TOWN WAS SURELY THE VICTIM OF A CURSE.

HIS FATHER WAS REALLY WORRIED -

SAN ...

HE STILL HADN'T CROSSED THE HOUSE'S DOORWAY THAT HE STARTED TO SHOUT HIS NAME. BUT THE BOY WASN'T THERE.

SAN !!!

ALL OVER THE TOWN, DOORS AND WINDOWS WERE CLOSED. YOU COULD ONLY SEE, AT CROSSROADS AND IN THE ALLEYS, ONE OR TWO STRAY DOGS AND A FEW BEGGARS WHO DIDN'T EVEN HAVE A HUT ANYMORE.

SAN !!!

SAN !!!

IN THE STREETS. THERE WEREN'T PILES OF GARBAGE ANYMORE BUT TONS OF INDUSTRIAL RUBBISH. IT WAS THEN HARD TO MAKE ONE'S WAY THROUGH. BY CONTINUING STRAIGHT AHEAD. YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO ARRIVE AT THE WOODS THAT FOLLOWED THE COAST.

SAN ...

!!

SUDDENLY, YA SAN'S FATHER BUMPED INTO SOMEONE. BY THE LIGHT OF HIS ELECTRIC LAMP, HE SAW THAT HE WAS TALL, HARDY AND WORE A RAINCOAT.

CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME WATER?

...

THOUGH HE COULDN'T SEE HIS FACE, THE MAN SEEMED KIND TO HIM.

WELL, FRANKLY I'M WORRIED ABOUT THIS KID.

DON'T WORRY... NOTHING WILL HAPPEN TO THIS KID.

ACTUALLY, I'VE FOUND HIM ON A BEACH.

I HURRIED TO TAKE HIM BACK HOME, BUT I DIDN'T DARE TO TELL ANYBODY AND I RAISED HIM IN SECRET. FROM THEN ON, I ALWAYS HAD TO LEAVE TO EARN MY LIVING AND I FEARED THAT THE OTHERS WOULD MISTREAT HIM OR TELL HIM THAT HE WAS BORN FROM AN UNKNOWN MOTHER, SO I ENTRUSTED HIM TO MY NEIGHBOR, AN OLD WOMAN, WHO TOOK CARE OF HIM.

AT THAT TIME, I WAS AROUND TWENTY. WHEN I FOUND THAT HE WAS WRAPPED IN SILK AND SATIN, I TOLD MYSELF THAT ORDINARY PARENTS COULD NEVER AFFORD SUCH LUXURY.

THE BABY'S FACE HAD BEEN BURNED BY THE SUN AND HIS SKIN LOOKED LIKE THAT OF A DRIED FISH, HIS EYES WERE SHUT TIGHT AND SMALL SPOTS COVERED HIS ENTIRE BODY.

IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, YOU HAVE EVEN LESS REASON TO WORRY ABOUT HIM.

WHY?

IF HE'S NOT NATIVE TO MUPANSEN, AND ASSUMING THAT THIS VILLAGE IS STRICKEN BY A CURSE, THEN HE SHOULDN'T BE AFFECTED BY THESE ADVERSITIES!

THE FENCES AND ELECTRIC CABLES CROSSED A LUSH FOREST FROM WHICH YOU COULD SEE THE SMOOTH SURFACE OF THE SEA. BY FOLLOWING THE COAST TOWARD NORTH, YOU ARRIVED BEHIND THE DARK INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT.

INCIDENTALLY, THE LUXURY YACHT FACTORY WAS LOCATED IN THIS DISTRICT.

BEHIND A FOREST OF SHRUBS, A VILLA, COMPLETELY OUT OF PLACE IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD OF FACTORIES, WAS HIDING ITSELF.

A YOUNG GIRL, SITTING IN FRONT OF A WINDOW, WAS PLAYING A MELANCHOLIC PIECE ON A PIANO.

MISS ...

IT WAS MEALTIME. THE YOUNG GIRL RELUCTANTLY ABANDONED THE FINGERBOARD AND WENT THROUGH A LONG HALLWAY.

MEOW !!

A BLACK CAT THAT HAD JUST WOKEN UP ARCHED ITS BACK AND SAT IN FRONT OF THE ELEVATOR. WHEN THE DOORS OPENED, IT TOOK ITS MOMENTUM AND JUMPED ON THE YOUNG GIRL'S LAP.

HER SKIN WAS SO PALE AND SMOOTH THAT YOU WOULD THINK HER FACE WAS MADE OUT OF WAX.

SHE DIDN'T FEEL THE CAT'S WEIGHT AT ALL BECAUSE HER LEGS WERE SENSELESS. FROM THE KNEES TO THE TOP OF THE THIGHS.

TELL ME HOW MOTHER SHOULD DEAL WITH YOU?

IN THE DINNING ROOM APPEARED A WOMAN DRESSED IN BLACK. HE ZHU* DIDN'T GIVE HER ANY ATTENTION. SHE TOOK HER NAPKIN AND FOLDED IT.

*PRONOUNCED "LE DJOU"

IT'S RUDE OF YOU TO STAY THIS LONG WITHOUT SEEING YOUR MOTHER, YOU DIDN'T EVEN GREET ME!

SINCE A LONG TIME, THE YOUNG GIRL HAD WALLED HERSELF IN HER WORLD. IF ONLY THIS WOMAN WHO PRETENDED TO BE HER MOTHER ACTUALLY TOOK ON HER ROLE.

WHY DO YOU KEEP QUIET? YOU'RE ALREADY CRIPPLED. AND TO SAY THE TRUTH. EVERYBODY HAVE GIVEN UP ON YOU.

...

...

Ring

Ring

Ring

Ring Ring

?

MA'AM. A CALL FOR YOU...

WHEN HE WOKE UP, YA SAN'S FATHER SAW SOME LIGHT IN HIS SON'S OLD ROWBOAT.

...

HE HAD SPENT THE NIGHT VAINLY LOOKING FOR HIM AND HERE HE APPEARED ALL OF A SUDDEN. BUT WHEN HE ENTERED THE ROWBOAT, HE NOTICED THAT THE BOY WASN'T THERE.

CRIC
...

?

THE FATHER CAREFULLY OPENED THE PLASTIC BAG. INSIDE, HE FOUND A SANDAL MADE OUT OF RED PLASTIC AND A BOTTLE OF COLA.

...

!!!!!

THE BOTTLE WAS FILLED WITH SMALL PLUMPED LARVAS, WITH TRIANGULAR TAILS, SHARP AS ARROWS.

HE HASTENED TO THROW THE BOTTLE AWAY...

YA SAN ENDED UP COMING BACK HOME. HE SLIPPED INTO THE ROWBOAT TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING.

!!!

SANI WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN LAST NIGHT?

DAD!!

WHERE IS THE BLACK PLASTIC BAG?

YOU THREW IT AWAY? WHERE?

I... I THREW IT IN THE CANAL.

OH YOU, YOU NEVER LISTEN TO ME. WHERE WERE YOU LAST NIGHT ?

...

YA SAN STOOD STILL FOR A MOMENT. THEN HE GOT UP AND RUSHED TOWARD THE DOOR.

OH, YOU'RE SO STUBBORN! EXPLAIN YOURSELF!

WHAT WAS INSIDE IT?

HIS FATHER RAN AFTER HIM, BREATHLESS, WITHOUT BEING ABLE TO CATCH UP WITH HIM.

SAN !!!

!!

...

...

FINALLY, FATHER AND SON STOPPED, DROPS OF SWEAT STANDING OUT ON THEIR BROW.

...

FLOATING IN THE FILTHY DRAINAGE CANAL WERE THOUSANDS OF BLACK PLASTIC BAGS. THAT WASN'T SURPRISING AT ALL. THE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION SERVICE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF THIS TOWN AND THOSE WHO WEREN'T FROM MUPANSEN HAD TURNED IT INTO A DUMP.

SERIOUSLY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

...

YA SAN STAYED A FEW DAYS WITHOUT TALKING. COME THE EVENING, HE WAS GOING TO THE DUMP, SALVAGING SOME PIECES OF WOOD AND METAL AS IF PLANNING TO RENOVATE HIS BOAT.

HIS FATHER OBSERVED HIM, HE WISHED TO APOLOGIZE BUT IN THE END, HE DID NOTHING. DEEP DOWN INSIDE, A VOICE WHISPERED TO HIM THAT THIS BOY WASN'T HIS, THAT SOMEDAY HE WOULD LEAVE AND THAT IT WAS THE WAY THINGS GO. THE MORE THE FATHER THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THE MORE SADDENED HE WAS.

...

THERE WAS ONE MORE DISAPPEARANCE AT MUPANSEN. IN THE ZHANG* FAMILY THAT LIVED AT THE END OF THE TOWN. MR ZHANG WAS A COBBLER FROM ANOTHER PROVINCE WHO CAME TO WORK IN THE CITY OF ZHIHAI. HE'D HEARD THAT THE RENTS WERE PRETTY LOW AT MUPANSEN AND SO HE MOVED IN. BRINGING ALONG HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN.

!!

IF THE OWNER HADN'T BROKEN DOWN THE DOOR TO CLAIM HIS RENT. NOBODY WOULD HAVE NOTICED THAT ONE OF THE VILLAGERS HAD DIED IN HIS HOME.

!!!!!

*PRONOUNCED "DJANG"

SINCE THEY COULDN'T DETERMINE THE CAUSE OF THIS DEATH, THEY MADE THE CONNECTION WITH THE DREADFUL AFFAIRS THAT OCCURED SOME TIME BEFORE.

THE POLICE WERE SCARED AND THE INHABITANTS OF MUPANSEN EVEN MORE SO. AS FOR THE RUMOR OF THE VILLAGE CURSE, MORE AND MORE PEOPLE WERE STARTING TO BELIEVE IT.

CALLED FOR BY THE ELDERS, THOSE NATIVE TO THE TOWN BEGAN TO PRACTICE SOME RITUALS IN ORDER TO WARD OFF EVIL.

AMONG THE OLD PEOPLE, SOME THOUGHT THAT THE SPIRITS OF THE SEA FELT OFFENDED BECAUSE, THOUGH THIS PLACE WAS ORIGINALLY AN ISLAND, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE FISHING BAN, NO ONE PROSTRATED OR OFFERED SACRIFICES TO HONOR THEM ANYMORE*

*IN CHINA, SOME ANCIENT TRADITIONS SURVIVE IN COUNTRIES WHERE THEY WORSHIP THE SPIRITS OF NATURE BY MAKING OFFERINGS, IN ORDER TO HAVE A GOOD FISHING OR ABUNDANT HARVESTS.

YA SAN WAS LYING ON HIS BED, TURNING OVER AND OVER WITHOUT FINDING SLEEP.
HE WAS NERVOUSLY RECALLING EACH OF THE LATEST EVENTS.

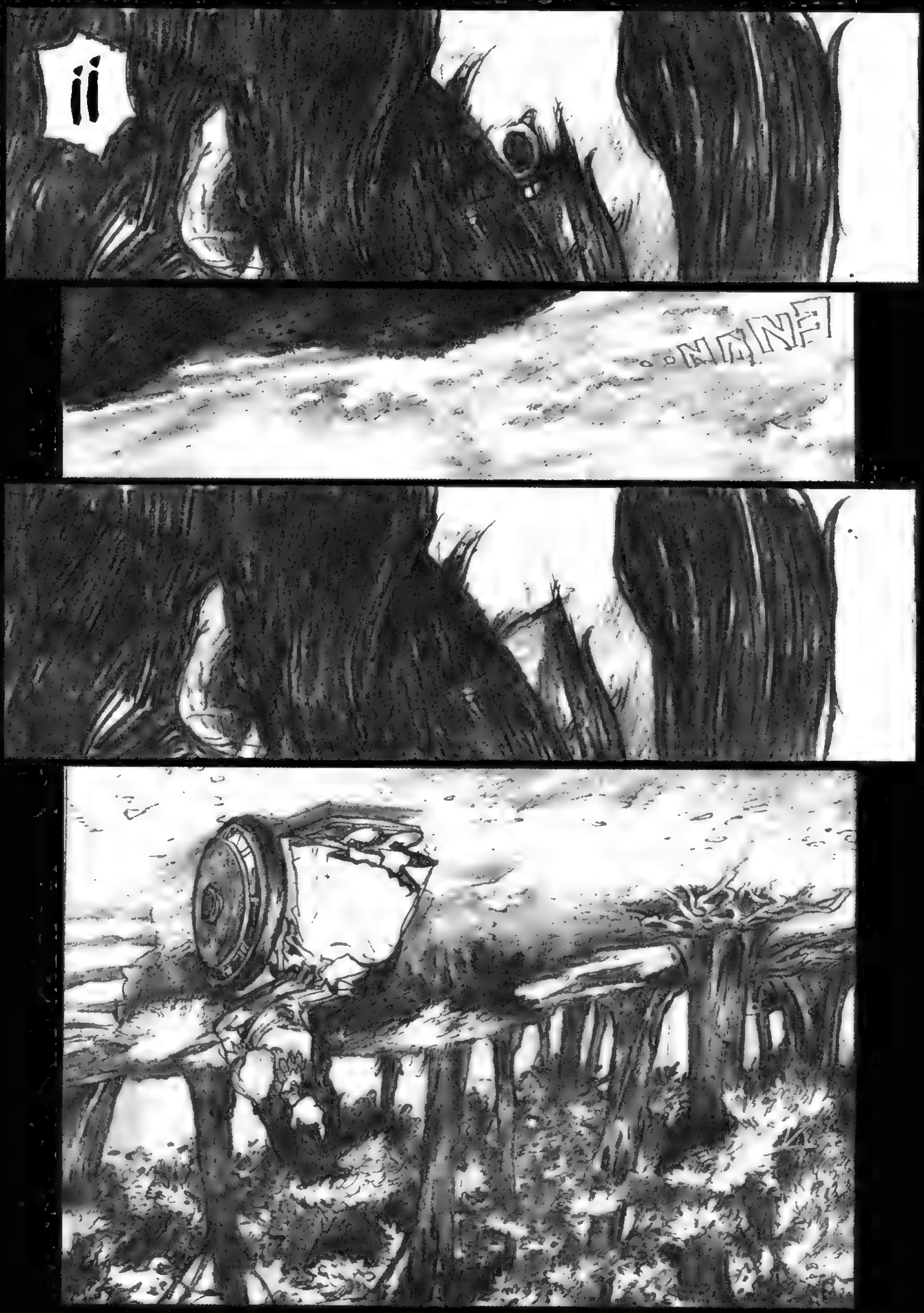
...

!?

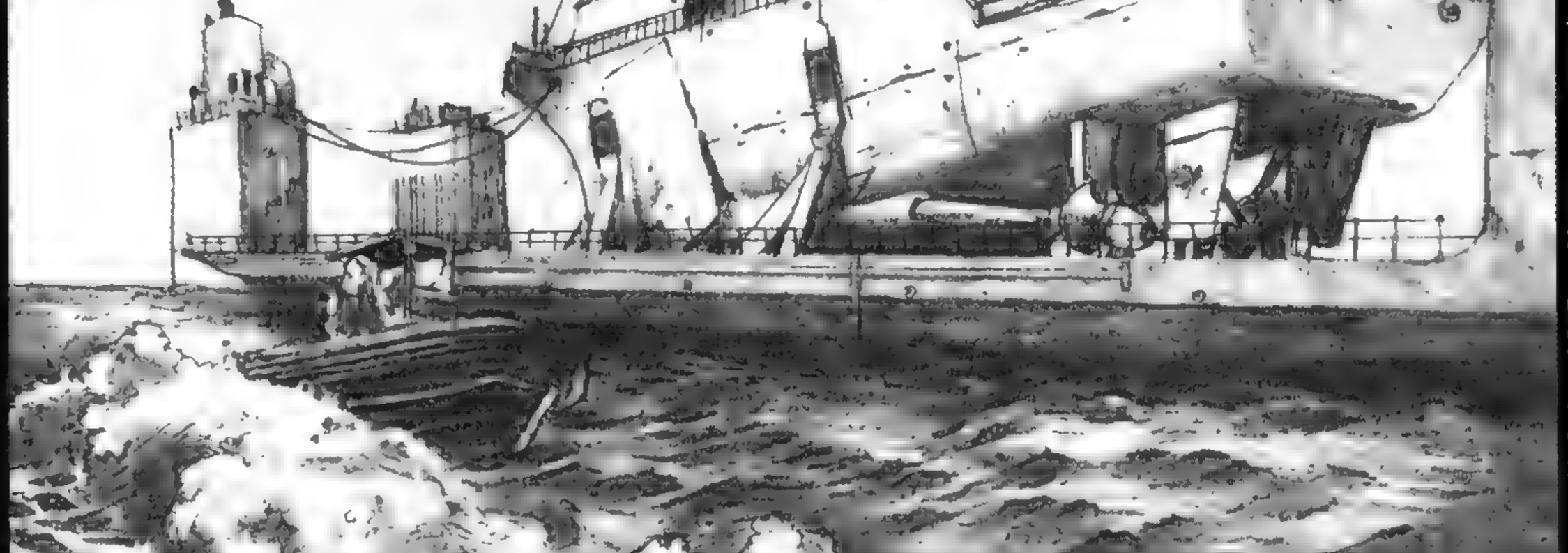
Crii Crii

A STRANGE THING HAPPENED NOT LONG AFTER THE DAY HE BROUGHT BACK THE RED SANDAL.
THE BLACK BAG THAT CONTAINED THE SHOE STARTED TO MOVE BEFORE HIS EYES...

AS FOR HE ZHU, BESIDES THE PIANO, SHE HAD NOTHING TO KILL TIME. AFTER HAVING SPENT ANOTHER BORING SUNDAY, SHE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE MAID AND GUARD'S INATTENTION TO WHEEL HER CHAIR AND LEAVE UNNOTICED.


ii
NANE!

A SPEEDBOAT HAD APPEARED IN THE DISTANCE ALONG THE SHORE LINE. IT SEEMED TO STEER AT A GREAT PACE TOWARD THE DOCK OF THE BOAT FACTORY.



!!

IT WAS ALREADY NIGHTFALL AND, WITH SUCH A LIGHT, YOU COULD SEE NEITHER THE SIZE NOR THE ASPECT OF THE PEOPLE GETTING OFF OF THE BOAT.

HOWEVER HE ZHU COULD TELL WITHOUT HESITATION THAT HER MOTHER WAS AMONG THOSE PEOPLE.

EVEN IF SHE COULDN'T SEE THE EXPRESSION OF HER FACE, THE ANXIETY SHE FELT BECAUSE OF YEARS OF THREATS MADE BY HER MOTHER WERE ENOUGH TO TRIGGER A CONDITIONED REACTION.

MOM!!?

YA SAN OPENED THE BAG. HE FOUND THAT SOMETHING HAD GROWN ON XIAO HUA'S SANDAL...

!!

IT WAS SOME STRANGE BROWN SHAPES THE SIZE OF A HALF-FINGER. COVERED WITH FIBERS OF RED PLASTIC.

HE REMEMBERED HAVING SEEN SUCH INSECTS IN AN ENTOMOLOGY BOOK.

HE OPENED THE BOOK TO CHECK IT OUT...

HE NOTICED A STRIKING SIMILARITY BETWEEN THE INSECTS DEPICTED AND THE RAINCOAT INSECTS.

AFTER ALL, MAYBE IT WAS INDEED THOSE INSECTS.

YA SAN TOOK THE BAG AND TOOK THE BUS FOR ZHIHAI.

MUPANSEN LINE 8

HIW1983

HE FOUND THE ENTOMOLOGIC RESEARCH INSTITUTE IN THE MIDDLE OF THIS HUGE CITY. THE INSTITUTE WAS IN BAD SHAPE AND SEEMED TO BE ABANDONED FOR YEARS.

IN THE RESEARCH ROOMS SOME OLD INSTRUMENTS. MEDICINE VIALS AND OTHER GARBAGE WERE LYING ABOUT_

EXCUSE ME...

...ANY-BODY HERE ?

_BUT NOBODY WORKED HERE ANYMORE.

WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR, SON?

!!

WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT?

MY NAME'S YA SAN ...

HA HA! THAT'S QUITE A NICE NAME, YOU CAN CALL ME UNCLE CHENG*.

UNCLE CHENG... HE DIDN'T SEEM FRIGHTENING.

*"IT'S CUSTOMARY FOR CHINESE YOUTHS TO CALL THE ADULTS "UNCLE" OR "AUNT"

ENTOMOLOGY

YA SAN SPENT THE DAY IN UNCLE CHENG'S ATTIC ROOM, SO MUCH THAT HE COULDN'T CATCH THE LAST BUS TO RETURN TO MUPANSEN. SO HE SIMPLY STAYED HERE.

UNCLE CHENG LIKED THE YOUNG BOY. HE FELT THAT HE HAD SOMETHING DIFFERENT, EVEN IF HE WAS NOT THE TALKATIVE TYPE.

DINNER'S SERVED !!!

THESE LAST DAYS, THE INSECTS HAD GROWN AT AN INCREDIBLE PACE. PERHAPS COMPELLED BY HUNGER, THEY HAD DEVOURED THEIR DEAD FELLOWS...

OF ALL YA SAN KNEW ABOUT THE LEGEND OF THE RAINCOAT INSECTS, WHAT INTRIGUED HIM THE MOST WAS THE MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF HIS GRANDFATHER SINCE AT THAT TIME HIS FATHER WAS STILL A CHILD. HE FEARED THAT THE ONLY PERSON IN THE VILLAGE WHO KNEW THIS STORY IN DETAIL WOULD BE A SANG, AN OLD WOMAN ALREADY OVER 80 YEARS OLD.

AH, THIS VILLAGE SHOULD HAVE NEVER EXISTED... THIS CHILD, ON THE BEACH, HE WAS SO PITIFUL... AH, YA SAN... YOU'VE GROWN UP, YOU'RE TALLER AND TALLER, AND ME SMALLER AND SMALLER...

IN THE BOAT, THEY FOUND A LOT OF INSECTS TOO, DIDN'T THEY?

MRS A SANG, I'D LIKE TO KNOW THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF MY GRANDFATHER'S DISAPPEARANCE, IT'S SAID THAT HE VANISHED ON AN ISLAND.

THE OLD WOMAN WAS LYING ON A DILAPIDATED WOODEN BED. HER RELATIVES DIED BEFORE HER, OR THEY HAD LEFT MUPANSEN A LONG TIME AGO TO MAKE THEIR LIVES SOMEWHERE ELSE.

HEY! I KNOW THAT. OF COURSE I'LL TAKE CARE OF HIM. I BEG OF YOU, TELL ME ABOUT THE ISLAND WHERE MY GRANDFATHER DISAPPEARED.

YA SAN, HE WASN'T YOUR REAL GRAND-FATHER.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING ?

AH, SON, YOUR FATHER IS GETTING OLD, SOMEDAY HE'LL BE LIKE ME, CONFINED TO A BED HERE, UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING, YOU MUST TAKE CARE OF HIM!

...ISLAND... THIS ISLAND? IT'S FAR, VERY FAR... ACCORDING TO THOSE WHO WENT THERE, IT'S SURROUNDED BY HUGE RED REEFS, IT HOUSES A LIGHTHOUSE...

EVERYONE WHO WENT THERE WAS OLDER THAN HIM. AFTER THEIR RETURN, THEY CONTRACTED A STRANGE DISEASE AND DIED ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

...AND A LOT OF INSECTS. YOUR GRANDFATHER WAS A BRAVE MAN. IT'S A SHAME, HE WAS SO YOUNG...

MRS A SANG ...

HE CALLED FOR HER A FEW TIMES. WITHOUT GETTING AN ANSWER, SHE SEEMED DEEPLY ASLEEP.

HE LEFT THE OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE AND HE TOO, FOUND THAT HE HAD GROWN UP A LOT.

SO HE WASN'T HIS REAL GRAND-FATHER? SO HIMSELF WASN'T BORN FROM THIS FATHER?

BUT IF HE WAS TO TALK TO HIM ABOUT THIS, HE WOULD SURELY MAKE HIM SAD. BETTER PRESERVE THE SECRET THAT A SANG HAD TOLD HIM!

WITHOUT TELLING HIS FATHER, YA SAN METICULOUSLY FIXED THE BOAT.

MEOW !!

...

AT UNCLE CHENG'S, HE'D FOUND AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "EXTRAORDINARY ANNALS OF ANTIQUE INSECTS". IT MENTIONED AN ISLAND NAMED "LIAO" THAT WAS. 600 YEARS AGO, A QUARANTINE AREA FOR THE CONTAGIOUSLY ILL. MILLIONS OF DISEASED AFFECTED BY CHYLOMICRONEMIA* WERE SENT THERE AND ALL OF THEM DIED.

AMONG THEM WAS A YOUNG GIRL, SHE WASN'T DEAD AND SHE WAS WAITING ALONE ON THIS ISLAND...

HER ONLY COMPANIONS WERE THE RAINCOAT INSECTS WHICH, LIKE HER, HAD BEEN ABANDONED. SHE FED THEM WITH CADAVERS AND EVEN GAVE THEM HER OWN FLESH. ALL OF THE INSECTS THEN CONTRACTED HER VIRUS AND BECAME CARRIERS. REPRODUCING BY THE THOUSANDS ON THE ISLAND...

*ILLNESS CHARACTERIZED BY THE PRESENCE OF FAT IN THE BLOOD AND SOMETIMES PROVOKES CUTANEOUS RASHES.

...

IN WHAT SEA WAS THE ISLAND OF "LIAO" LOCATED? WAS IT THE PLACE WHERE HIS GRANDFATHER HAD DISAPPEARED ? FOR SEVERAL DAYS, YA SAN WENT TO THE LIBRARY AND THE OCEANOGRAPHIC MUSEUM. HE EVEN WENT TO THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM BUT COULDN'T FIND THE SLIGHTEST SATISFACTORY ANSWER.

HOWEVER, HE HEARD FROM A FISHERMAN THAT NORTH OF THE STRAITS OF HONGGU WAS AN ISLAND, SURROUNDED BY RED REEFS, CALLED "SHILIAO". BUT CONSIDERING THE BOAT HIS GRANDFATHER HAD BACK THEN, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO SAIL SO FAR.

ANYWAY. YA SAN WAS DETERMINED TO TRY HIS LUCK.

EVEN IF AN ISLAND CALLED "LIAO" WAS NOWHERE TO BE FOUND, THE ISLAND WHERE HIS GRANDFATHER HAD DISAPPEARED SHOULD REALLY EXIST!

...

THERE WAS NO FENCE WHERE THE CANAL AND THE ENTRANCE OF THE HARBOR MET. JUST SOME BIG ELECTRIC CABLES.

IT WAS POSSIBLE TO GO THROUGH BY DUCKING UNDER THE CABLES. EVEN IF THERE WERE A LOT OF WHIRLS, SOME PASSAGES WERE ALMOST DRY. WITH SOME LUCK, YOU COULD PULL THE BOAT AND GET OUT OF THE CANAL.

...

ONCE AT THE MOUTH, YOU JUST HAD TO PUSH THE BOAT IN THE HARBOR'S ENTRANCE, AND THEN ROW IT TO THE SEA.

IF MY MOTHER REALLY DID SUCH THINGS, THAT'S TRULY UNFORGIVABLE!

THESE DAYS, DEATHS AND DISAPPEARANCES FOLLOW ONE ANOTHER AT MUPANSEN. I'LL DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO FIND HIM.

MISS, WHEN ONE'S IN DANGER, ONE MUST THINK OF SAVING HIMSELF FIRST.

WHEN WILL I BE ABLE TO SEE HIM?

THANK YOU.

SEEING THE SILHOUETTE OF THE MAN WITH THE RAINCOAT FADING AWAY. HE ZHU JOINED HER HANDS AND CLOSED HER EYES.

SHE THOUGHT : "THE DAY WILL COME WHEN I'LL MAKE MOTHER FACE HER CRIMES. I'LL MAKE THEM REAPPEAR BEFORE HER EYES."

"I'M ALONE IN THE WORLD BUT I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS ABANDONNED BY MY MOTHER. AFTER ALL, ISN'T THAT A RELIEF? AND THIS BIG BROTHER... HOW IS HE? IF HE COULD TAKE ME AWAY FROM THIS LIFE FOREVER. WHAT A JOY!"

IN ACCORDANCE WITH HIS PLAN, YA SAN GOT TO THE SHORE SAFE AND SOUND. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME HE WENT OUT THAT WAY BUT HE FACED THE SEA LIKE HE HAD ALWAYS DONE IT.

ALL OF THIS LEFT HIM EXCITED AND MOVED...

HELP... HELP ME...

!!

AT THE SAME TIME, HE SAW A MAN CRAWLING A FEW STEPS AWAY FROM HIM. HE SEEMED TO BE FROM MUPANSEN.

PLEASE ... HELP ME!

...

!!

HEY! HEY! WHAT'S HAPPENING TO YOU?

THE BOAT FACTORY ...

THE HOLD... IN THE BOAT'S HOLD... THERE'S... THERE'S...

THE BOAT FACTORY? IS SOMETHING HAPPENING IN THE FACTORY?

IT WAS LOCATED IN A RESTRICTED AREA. COULD AN ACCIDENT HAVE OCCURRED THERE?

TO HELP THE MAN, YA SAN HURRIED AND NAVIGATED TOWARD THE FACTORY. HE WAS ABOUT TO REACH THE CONTROL STATION.

!?

!!

WHILE HE WAS ENTERING THE HARBOR, LIGHT RAYS POINTED AT HIS CRAFT HURT HIS EYES. THE PADDLE HE HAD IN HIS HAND FELL IN THE SEA.

QUICK, PREVENT HIM FROM ENTERING !!

ALERT !!!

ALERT !!!

YA SAN HAD YET RECOVER WHEN HE SAW METALLIC CLAWS CLINGING FIRMLY TO THE BODY OF HIS BOAT.

!!

AH!!!

OH! WE'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU FOR SO LONG, AND HERE YOU ARE...

WHO'RE YOU?

LET ME GO!

CLING

BLAM

TWO "SOLDIERS" CALIGHT YA SAN AND HOISTED HIM UP ABOARD THE SHIP.

...

HEHE ...

THIS IS X201.

IT'S OVER.

WE'VE PUT HIM IN THE HOLD.

AFTER SITTING PENSIVELY AT HER FATHER'S GRAVE, HE ZHU FELT ILL AT EASE. IN THE FUTURE, EACH WILL BE PUNISHED DEPENDING ON THEIR FAULTS. SHE STAYED ALONE, SITTING BEFORE THE STELE.
!!

...

READ IT AFTER I LEAVE.

DEAR MS, AFTER AN INVESTIGATION, IT APPEARS THAT THIS CHILD IS ONE OF THE DISAPPEARED. IT'S SAID THAT HE'S SPENT SEVERAL DAYS REPAIRING AN OLD WOODEN BOAT AND THAT THE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, THE VERY SAME BOAT VANISHED WITH SOMEONE ON BOARD...

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?...

IF HE INTENDED TO GO TO SEA WITH SUCH A SMALL CRAFT, SURELY HE MUST BE ON THE SHORE BETWEEN MUPANSEN AND THE BOAT FACTORY. I'LL HAVE A LOOK AT THE OTHER DISAPPEARANCE CASES AND SEE IF THERE'S A LINK WITH THE FACTORY.

AS THE EVENING APPROACHED, HE ZHU FELT THAT SHE COULDN'T EAT ANYTHING.

HER MOTHER WAS RARELY AT HOME DURING THE NIGHT. APART FROM THE SOUND OF THE TRAIN, NOTHING COULD BE HEARD.

...

THEY LIVED UNDER THE SAME ROOF AND YET. THE YOUNG GIRL AND HER MOTHER WERE LIKE STRANGERS.

A PRECIOUS JEWEL CASE WAS STORED IN A DRAWER NEAR THE BED. AT THE BOTTOM WAS A PACKET WRAPPED IN BLACK SILK VELVET.

?

!!!

IT CONTAINED A BLACK FRAME. A PHOTO OF HER WHEN SHE WAS YOUNG. ALONG WITH ONE OF HER FATHER. BUT THE TWO FACES HAD BEEN SMEARED WITH BLACK INK!

DAD
...

TAK

TAK

TAK

HE ZHU PACKED THEM UP AS THEY WERE IN THE BLACK VELVET AND PUT THE WHOLE BACK IN THE DRAWER. SHE THOUGHT OF WHEELING HER CHAIR TO SEE SOMETHING ELSE WHEN SUDDENLY, SHE HEARD THE NOISE OF HIGH HEELS IN THE HALLWAY...

MOM ...

...THAT NOISE SHE KNEW SO WELL!

YES, YOU JUST DOCKED...

YES, I KNOW. HOW OLD IS THIS BOY?

...TEN OR SO? OH, THAT MIGHT BE A GOOD CATCH! EXACTLY, WAIT UNTIL I'M THERE.

THAT BOY... COULD THAT BE HIM?

MOM ...

...

...

MUPANSEN WAS PLUNGED INTO CHAOS. EVERYBODY THOUGHT THE DEATHS AND DISAPPEARANCES WERE THE RESULT OF A CURSE. SOME WERE LEAVING THE VILLAGE.

THOSE WHO DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH TO LEAVE WERE LOCKING THEMSELVES IN, BARRICADING THEIR DOOR AND COVERING IT WITH SCRIPTURES TO WARD OFF EVIL.

LOOKING FOR HIS SON, YA SAN'S FATHER KNOCKED FROM DOOR TO DOOR SO MUCH THAT HIS HAND WAS ALL RED AND SWOLLEN.

SAN!! ARE YOU HERE?

PA!!!

!!!!!

...

THE VILLAGER WHO WAS LOCKED IN WAS AGONIZING. IT WAS AS IF HIS CHEEKS HAD BEEN DEVOURED BY MAGGOTS OR SMALLPOX.

...

YA SAN'S FATHER WAS STILL STRESSED BY FEAR WHEN A MAN APPEARED AT THE DOOR. SIMILAR TO THE ONE HE SAW EARLIER : TALL, ROBUST. WEARING A RAINCOAT. HIS FACE CONCEALED. THOUGH HE SPOKE TO HIM FAMILIARLY...

I KNOW ABOUT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE CHILD.

SAN?

IT'S YOU?

ME TOO,
IT'S THE FIRST TIME
I'VE COME ACROSS
A DISAPPEARANCE CASE
OF SUCH MAGNITUDE.
SINCE WE CAN'T FIND
THE CAUSE INSIDE
THE VILLAGE,
IT'S PROBABLY THE DEED
OF A STRANGER.
TO KIDNAP PEOPLE AND
MAKE THEM DISAPPEAR,
THE BOAT FACTORY
SEEMS THE MOST
APPROPRIATE TO ME.

AND WHAT DO
THEY INTEND TO
DO WITH THESE
POOR PEOPLE?
TURN THEM INTO
WORKERS?

MAYBE...
IN THAT
CASE THEY'RE
STILL ALIVE!

...

DON'T WORRY,
THE CHILD
IS STILL ALIVE.

...

!!

YA SAN HAD BEEN KNOCKED OUT. WHEN HE WOKE UP, HE REALIZED HIS HEAD WAS LYING ON A PORTHOLE. HIS HANDS AND FEET SHACKLED WITH HEAVY CHAINS.

SUDDENLY, THROUGH THE PORTHOLE, HE SAW A BIG FISH GOING BY. THOUGH THE SHIP WASN'T SUPPOSED TO BE AT SEA.

SOME TIME LATER, THE HOLD'S DOOR OPENED AND THE ROOF SWITCHED ON, LIGHTING TWO MEN DRESSED IN WHITE UNIFORMS, STRANGE HATS AND MASKS.

...

CLAC CLAC

THE MEN STAYED QUIET FOR A WHILE. ALL OF A SUDDEN, THEY STEPPED ASIDE TO GIVE WAY TO A WOMAN WEARING SUNGLASSES AND A BLACK SKINTIGHT SUIT.

SO THAT'S HIM? HE SEEMS RATHER FRAGILE!

HE'S HERE.

...

...

YOU TWO... DON'T STAND THERE LIKE THAT! RAISE HIM UP SO I CAN HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT HIM!

RIGHT AWAY!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING? LET ME GO!

AN ODD LAMP WITH MANY BEAMS SUDDENLY SWITCHED ON. YA SAN SENSED A STRANGE FEAR GROWING INSIDE HIM.

!!

AYYH!!

CLANG

!!

IF HE'S GOT ANY ILLNESS, THE DEVICE WON'T WORK.

RUN SOME ANALYSES FIRST!

HE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT HAD BECOME OF HIS FATHER. HE SHOULD HAVE DISCOVERED HIS DISAPPEARANCE AND WAS SURELY WORRIED! YA SAN HAD NEVER BEEN SO FRIGHTENED.

THE POLICE CONSIDERED THAT THE PRESUMPTIONS OF YA SAN'S FATHER CONCERNING THE "LINK BETWEEN THE FACTORY, THE BLACKMARKET, THE ILLEGAL ORGAN TRAFFIC, THE KIDPNAPPINGS, AND THE GRATUITOUS MURDER OF INNOCENTS" WAS UNFOUNDED.

THEY JUST ANNOUNCED THAT THEY'D SEND SOMEONE TO THE FACTORY TO INVESTIGATE, AS FOR WHETHER THE MURDERERS WOULD BE ARRESTED OR NOT, THEY WOULD WAIT FOR FURTHER EVENTS.

BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF STRANGE AFFAIRS AND TRAGIC EVENTS THAT HAD OCCURED AT MUPANSEN, THEY AVOIDED SPREADING NEWS ABOUT THE "RISE OF THE PRICE OF WATER" OR THE "INAUGURATION OF AN ARTIFICIAL WATER FACTORY". BUT THEY OPENED THEIR EYES MORE.

YA SAN'S FATHER SPENT THE NIGHT WRITING WITH INDIAN INK ON NEWSPAPER A PILE OF "REVELATIONS", AND WENT DOOR TO DOOR DISTRIBUTING THEM TO THE VILLAGERS.

...

?

BUT THE POLICE ALSO SPREAD FALSE RUMORS ABOUT HIM AND ARRESTED HIM.

YA SAN'S FATHER WAS RELEASED AFTER THREE DAYS. HE HAD THE IMPRESSION, WHEN RETURNING TO MUPANSEN, OF ARRIVING IN A DARK WORLD STRAIGHT OUT OF A NIGHTMARE.

HE DIDN'T KNOW WHEN HIS DOOR'S LOCK HAD BEEN PICKED...

!

A SCRAWNY MAN WAS LYING ON THE FLOOR OF HIS HOUSE. HIS BODY WAS COVERED WITH GRAZES AND DEEP CUTS.

HE DIDN'T TALK. THE FLESH OF HIS FACE SEEMED TO HAVE BEEN WHITEWASHED.

...

!!!

A LIN!

IT WAS A LIN, THE EGG MERCHANT OF THE STREET NEARBY. UNDOUBTEDLY, HE HAD CAUGHT THE STRANGE ILLNESS TOO.

WHAT'S HAPPEN-ING TO YOU?

AAH!!

A LIN!! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

MMM ...

A LIN! WHAT'S GOTTEN INTO YOU? YOU... YOU BIT ME...

A LIN'S CHEEK DISTORTED VIOLENTLY. IN A FEW SECONDS, HE HAD SWALLOWED THE BIT OF FLESH RIPPED OFF HIS NEIGHBOR'S ARM.

PLUNGED INTO DARKNESS, YA SAN SLEPT DEEPLY. HE FELT AS IF HE HAD BEEN SLEEPING FOR CENTURIES.

THE HOLD'S DOOR OPENED FOR THE SECOND TIME. A MAN WEARING A WHITE UNIFORM ENTERED, BUT HE SEEMED FAR MORE IMPOSING THAN THE PREVIOUS TWO.

...

LOST IN HIS HALLUCINATIONS, HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT HIS FATHER HAD LEFT HIM FOREVER. HE WAS SHATTERED BY THIS FOR AN INSTANT, THEN HE ABRUPTLY WOKE UP.

DAD!!!

DON' T SAY A THING !!

...

THE TWO MEN GOT OUT OF THE HOLD. TOOK A SPIRAL STAIRCASE AND ARRIVED ON THE DECK.

YA SAN NOTICED THE HUGE SIZE OF THE SHIP. ITS CORRIDORS WERE ALMOST LIKE A MAZE. THE YOUNG MAN COULDN'T HELP BUT ADMIRE ITS COMPLEX STRUCTURE.

...

QUICK! FOLLOW ME!

!!

WAIT !!

LET'S CHECK OVER THERE.

...

PH!

!!!

!!!!!

?!

WHO GOES THERE ?

OUCH!!

WHAT A STENCH!

WHAT IS THIS?

HE HAD NEVER SMELLED SUCH AN APPALLING SCENT. IT WAS LIKE A ROTTEN SPARROW SOAKED IN ANIMAL FAT! HIS HAIR STOOD UP AND HIS HEART STOPPED BEATING AS IF IT WAS CONSTRICTED.

DID YOU HEAR SOMETHING?

...

...

I SAW NOTHING.

KEEP AN EYE ON THIS AREA, I'LL GO CHECK OUT THE HOLD.

THERE'S NOTHING, YOU SURE YOU HEARD SOMETHING?

YOU THINK SOMEBODY HID INSIDE THE CADAVERS' ROOM!?

CALM DOWN, I PROMISED HIM THAT I WOULD GET YOU OUT OF HERE.

...

DON'T WORRY, I'M A FRIEND OF YOUR FATHER, WE'LL GET OUT OF HERE.

YOU SAW MY FATHER?

THEY STEPPED OVER THE CORPSES. ONE BY ONE. AND ENDED UP DISCOVERING A METALLIC DOOR. THIS ONE WAS ABNORMALLY HOT. THE HANDLE SEEMED BURNING TOO.

AAAAH !!!

PA!!!

A WORKER OF THE INCINERATOR ROOM WAS SLEEPING ON A WOODEN BED. HE WAS SOFTLY SNORING AND HIS LEFT FOOT WAS CHAINED TO THE INCINERATOR'S DOOR.

?!

WHAT? HE GOT AWAY? SORT THIS OUT, BRING HIM BACK TO ME!

MOM, YOU CAN'T KILL HIM!

HE ZHU! WHAT WERE YOU DOING AT THE FACTORY?

I WENT THERE TO HELP HIM.

RUBBISH! TO HELP WHO?

MY BROTHER.

YOU... WHAT DID YOU SAY?

MOM, DON'T YOU REMEMBER? SIXTEEN YEARS AGO, BEFORE YOU MARRIED DAD, YOU WERE PREGNANT...

...BUT TO GET MARRIED, YOU SECRETLY GOT RID OF THE CHILD ON THE BEACH. AND YOU DIDN'T THINK THAT DAD WOULD BUILD A FACTORY THERE...

SHUT UP! YOU... YOU HAVE NO PROOF!

MOM, YOU THOUGHT YOU COULD HIDE THIS OUTRAGE FROM THE WHOLE WORLD! THEN WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST STRANGLE THE CHILD AT HIS BIRTH? OUT OF COWARDICE!

AND WHY HAVEN'T YOU KILLED ME TOO? AGAIN, OUT OF COWARDICE! THAT'S WHY YOU'VE COMMITTED MORE AND MORE CRIMES. THIS BOY THAT YOU'VE LOCKED UP, IT'S MY BROTHER, TO ME WHO, SITTING IN MY WHEELCHAIR, SPEND NO DAY WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT DEATH!

AND IF YOU WERE TO KILL HIM...

...

...

...THEN I WOULD KILL MYSELF TOO.

...

FOOLS, HURRY UP AND GATHER THE WORKERS AND GUARDS, AND CAST THEM OFF!!

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? PEOPLE FROM MUPANSEN? HOW MANY ARE THERE? HUNDREDS!?

KEEP AN EYE ON THIS GIRL, DON'T LET HER GO THROUGH THAT DOOR!

YES, MA'AM !!

...

HEY!! WHO'RE YOU? GET AWAY FROM HERE!

THE SITUATION IS CRITICAL!

HURRY, CLOSE THE DOOR, THERE'S TOO MANY OF THEM!

AT THIS INSTANT. THE VILLAGERS REALLY LOOKED LIKE MONSTERS. THEY WERE COMING FROM EVERY SIDE OF THE FACTORY.

RHAA ...

RHAA ...

THERE'S MORE COMING!!! WE CAN'T HOLD ANY LONGER!! HURRY, STOP THEM!!

AARGH ...

THEY WEREN'T COMING TO LOOK FOR THEIR MISSING RELATIVES. BUT RATHER, PREY TO THE TORMENTS OF THIS "STRANGE ILLNESS" LOOKING FOR QUARRY AT HAND'S REACH. THEIR DESIRE, SPURRED BY THE BITES, ALLOWED THEM TO INSTINCTIVELY SMELL THE UNINFECTED BODIES.

THE "STRANGE ILLNESS" PLUNGED THEM FIRST INTO A DEEP SLEEP AND WHEN THEY WOKE UP THEY WEREN'T THEMSELVES ANYMORE. THEY JUMPED ON HEALTHY PEOPLE AND THOSE WHO WERE THE WEAKEST BY NATURE BECAME THE MOST AGGRESSIVE.

THROUGHOUT THE FACTORY THE CRIES, RALES AND BARKING WERE RISING IN UNISON.

RHAA... ARGH...

ARGH ...

RHA!!

AH! HELP!

RRR ...

!!!

QUICK, QUICK, HELP!

AAEH !!!

DADA!

...

I SAY WE CALL THE POLICE FOR SOME ASSISTANCE !

NO !... SHOOT THEM ALL!

BY THE WAY... PROTECT THE GIRL AT ALL COSTS.

ALSO... MAKE SURE YOU DON'T HURT THE BOY WHO ESCAPED.

FORGIVE ME, MY CHILDREN. YOU NEVER LOVED ME ANYWAY. I'LL THINK OF MYSELF FIRST.

...

...

WHO'S THERE !?

?

...

AAYY !!!

...

FORGIVE ME, YOUNG LADY, I'M LATE...

...

...

*IN CHINA, BROTHERS AND SISTERS ADRESS EACH OTHER BY TAKING THE BIRTH ORDER INTO CONSIDERATION.

POLICE

HA!

...

HAA!!

THE POLICEMEN, OVER-EQUIPPED, PROVIDED WITH GAS-MASKS, ARRIVED IN-CROWD IN THE FACTORY.

TO REPRESS THE "REVOLT OF THE STRANGE ILLNESS" COMING FROM MUPANSEN, COERCIVE METHODS HAD TO BE USED AND ARMED FORCES DEPLOYED.

THE POLICE, STATIONED ON AN ISLAND LOCATED MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED NAUTICAL MILES AWAY FROM THE FACTORY, WERE INVESTIGATING ON BOARD A "LUXURIOUS ABANDONED CARGO".

ON THE SHIP'S DECK WAS A SMALL HELIPORT AND EVERYTHING MADE YOU THINK THAT IT HAD JUST BEEN INAUGURATED_

_THE BRAND NEW EQUIPMENTS HAD BEEN STORED IN BOXES BEFORE EMBARKING.

WHILE INSPECTING THE HOLD, THE POLICE DISCOVERED THE OPERATING ROOM, THE STORAGE ROOM WHERE THE CORPSES HAD BEEN PILED AND THE INCINERATOR ROOM

IN THE LATTER WAS THE LIFELESS BODY OF A WORKER WHO HAD HUNG HIMSELF, ALONG WITH HIS LAST WILL.

EVERY TIME I MUST BURN THESE BODIES WITH THEIR OBSCURE STORY, I CAN FEEL THEIR SOUL GOING OUT THROUGH THE CHIMNEY AND CONTINUING TO LIVE AROUND ME. EVEN IF I SPREAD THEIR DUST INTO THE SEA, I CAN'T FIND REST.

WHAT A SHAME TO BE OBLIGED TO LIVE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE REASONS OF OUR EXISTENCE. REGARDLESS, WE PERSIST ON ABIDING IN THIS WORLD. IF I COULD EVER SEE THESE SOULS WITH MY OWN EYES, I WOULD SALUTE THEM. LET'S SAY THAT IT'S A SORT OF REPENTANCE IN ORDER TO FIND HAPPINESS IN A FUTURE LIFE!

NOW, I UNDERSTAND WHY THIS WORKER DIDN'T WANT TO FOLLOW US WHEN WE ESCAPED.

INDEED! EXCEPT FOR THE INCINERATOR ROOM, HE HAD NOWHERE TO GO.

BUT... WE HAVE NOWHERE TO GO EITHER, HAVE WE?

I GREW UP IN MUPANSEN. EVEN IF NOBODY LIVES THERE NOWADAYS AND THE VILLAGE IS IN RUIN ...

... MY HOUSE IS THERE. I CAN'T LEAVE THAT PLACE BECAUSE, IF MY FATHER CAME BACK, HE WOULDN'T FIND ME. BUT FIRST, THERE'S A PLACE I MUST GO TO.

WHETHER THE ISLAND IS CALLED SHILIAO OR LIAO, THERE MUST BE A WORLD POPULATED WITH MEN WHO LIVE WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE REASONS OF THEIR EXISTENCE. SURELY A "GIRL WITH CLOUDY BLOOD" LIVED IN LONELINESS FOR CENTURIES USING THE CADAVERS AND HER OWN FLESH TO FEED THE "RAINCOAT INSECTS".

PERHAPS SHE COULDN'T FORESEE THAT SOME DAY THESE INSECTS WOULD RESURRECT. AND THAT THEY'D SPREAD WITH SUCH A DESTRUCTIVE POWER AS THE PLAGUE'S. PERHAPS SHE'S IN THE LIGHTHOUSE AND SPENDS HER NIGHTS WATCHING THEM.

YA SAN WAS SURE THAT PEACE COULDN'T BE OBTAINED BY FORCE.

...

AND THOSE WHO CONSIDERED THE POOR NOT ONLY AS TOOLS BUT ALSO AS AN ENDLESS SOURCE OF PROFIT CONTINUE TO COMMIT IRREPARABLE CRIMES.

I BEG OF YOU, PLEASE KEEP ON WATCHING OVER HER. I'LL COME BACK, THANKS FOR EVERYTHING.

HE ZHU!

WAIT FOR ME, TRUST ME!

YA SAN EMBARKED ON A BRAND NEW SPEEDBOAT AND LEFT TOWARD THE HONGGU BAY.